Max Horkheimer's Problems with Science, Technology and Hope

C. Engelbrecht

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> 'The capitalist system in its present phase is organized exploitation on a world-wide scale. Its preservation creates boundless suffering. This society certainly has available the human and technical means to abolish the most blatant forms of physical wretchedness. We know of no era where this possibility existed to such a degree. […] All of official economics, the human sciences and philosophy, schools, the church, the arts and the press consider it their principal task to obscure, minimize, distort or deny this incredible fact.'[1]

1. Introduction

A reversal of Horkheimer's pessimism[2] from the above, one would expect, would give rise to an element of hope in his later (mature) writings – at least in those writings after his return from exile in the US in 1950. But instead, in 2011, when Axel Honneth outlined a three-year research program for the Institute for Social Research at the J.W. Goethe University, one finds remarkable overlaps between Horkheimer's views of some 80 years earlier and Honneth's examination of the 'structural transformations in contemporary societies'[3] that seem to persist unresolved ever since the early writing days in Horkheimer's lifetime. In the same vain, the publisher's note of *Towards a New*

[1] Horkheimer, M. 'A Premium Placed on Vileness', in Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, pp.28-29. For a discussion about Horkheimer's views of utopianism, see ; Gur-Ze'ev, I. 'Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer. From Utopia to Redemption.' <https:www.academia.edu/196504/WALTER_BENJAMIN_AND_MAX_HORKHEOMER_FROM_UTOPIA_TO-REDEMPTION>, pp.1-29.

[2] Sharpe, M. 'Young Horkheimer: Critical Theory *Before* Dialectic of Enlightenment, And After It.' February 2007.

[3] Honneth, A. '' 'Paradoxes of Capitalist Modernization.'' The Foundations of a Comprehensive Research Project of the Institute for Social Research', in <www.ifs.uni-frankfurt.de/english/paradox.htm> 2011, p.1.

Manifesto under the heading 'Introduction to Adorno & Horkheimer', made reference to Horkheimer and Adorno as 'prefigurations of what in a post-bourgeois world would become […]'[4] reality.

The purpose of this article is to investigate Horkheimer's views about the role and interplay between *science*, *technology* and *hope* with respect to how they relate to society and each other. This investigation is based on a selection of Horkheimer's published writings and does not comprise of Horkheimer's full conception of the *malaises* of capitalist civilization.[5]

Three points must be made at the outset. Horkheimer's views regarding science and technology do not stand separate from other concepts such as progress, suffering, barbarism, enlightenment, irrationality, hope, or critical theory, to name only a few.[6] Secondly, as with most other aspects of his work, his views about science and technology also changed over time, specifically with regards to the political economy of the East – in particular from the 1940s, in other words, even before he returned to Germany.[7] Lastly, this article is merely an outline for further research and is not intended to be comprehensive. It is an extension of an earlier investigation into Horkheimer's view of the concept of suffering[8] – but for our purposes here, science, technology and hope are complementary concepts and therefore not mutually exclusive to any other.

Horkheimer was well aware of the changed philosophical and historical times of what he called the 'bourgeois period' – that is, a current society in transition, in other words, the capitalist world. He was cognisant of the place of the individual, and in particular, his own, therein and how these circumstances relate to his later publishing strategy. A few examples from various stages of his life, will suffice to support this view. Of Horkheimer's own positon, the publisher's note to *Towards a New Manifesto,* refers to Horkheimer as 'historically more politicized'[9] (than Adorno), whilst according to Wiggerhaus, Horkheimer 'seemed from the start to be acting from the conviction that he was the bearer of a revolutionary message'[10] – meaning, an advocate of a classless society. If this is correct, then by the end of Horkheimer's life, one finds hardly any traces of such ambitions in his

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[4] Publisher's note: 'Introduction to Adorno & Horkheimer', in Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.(vi).

[5] Engelbrecht, C. Max Horkheimer's Concept of 'Suffering.' <independent.academia.edu.christorneglerecht/papers> 15 October 2014, pp.1-22.

[6] Recently J. Abromeit identifed the following four most central concepts for the development of Horkheimer's thought during the 1930s: materialism; the anthropology fo the bourgeois epoch; dialectical logics, and state capitalism. See Abromeit, J. *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School,* p.17.

[7] For a discussion about continuity or discontinuity in Hokheimer's thinking, see Abromeit, J. *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School,* chapter 2.

[8] Engelbrecht, C. 'Max Horkheimer's Concept of 'Suffering.'' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> 15 October 2014, pp.1-22.

[9] Publisher's note: 'Introduction to Adorno & Horkheimer', in Adorno, T. and M . Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.(ix).

[10] Wiggerhaus, R. *The Frankfurt School. Its History, Theories, and Political Significance,* p.39; Gur-Ze'ev, I. 'Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer. From Utopia to Redemption.' <https:www.academia.edu/196504/WALTER_BENJAMIN_AND_MAX_HORKHEOMER_FROM_UTOPIA_TO-REDEMPTION>, p.1.

writings. For instance, Horkheimer said (in 1956) that there are no assurances that contemporary live will not relapse into barbarism again.[11]

As early as 22 August 1918, in a letter to Rosa Riekher and Friedrich Pollock, Horkheimer wrote pessimistically that 'this era will devour us'.[12] Much later, towards the end of his life he penned in a letter dated 17 December 1972 to Herbert and Inge Marcuse, that he is 'already quite old and am getting more and more stupid.' To this, Herbert Marcuse replied in January 1973, that 'this world is terrible and is becoming even more terrible, "beyond our capacity of imagination."'[13] Much of Horkheimer's writings throughout his life reflected this sombre mood in one form or another. Consequently, at times, he was also less enthusiastic to publish some of his work.

With reference to his publishing decisions, Horkheimer spelled out the changes in his thinking, and in some instances, even distanced himself from his previous written work.[14] For instance, by the late 1970s, M. Shaw wrote that Horkheimer admitted that the material for *Dawn and Decline* was outdated – however his earlier thoughts (said Horkheimer), 'may not be wholly without significance at a later time.'[15] In addition he wrote in this regard: 'The formalization of contemporary thought, its relativism and historicism, the assimilation to the prevailing consciousness which begins the moment a great thought appears, the reification of all the life as chapters in history and sociology'[16] – all testify that intellectual and socio-political changes are everyday occurrences that influence humankind of which we need to be aware of. This 'later time' (which Horkheimer referred to) came in the late 1960s when he wrote in a letter to Willi Brundert, dated 8 April 1968, 'that they [his 1930s essays] contain many not unproductive ideas.'[17] Earlier, in the 1966 'Preface to the Italian Edition' of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno made it clear that 'the book is shaped by the social conditions in which it was written'.[18] Similarly, in the 1969 'Preface to the New Edition', we read: 'We do not stand by everything we said in the book in its original form. That would be incompatible with a theory which attributes a temporal core to truth […] the formulation is no longer adequate to the reality of today.'[19]

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[11] Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.23. Since M. Jay and A. Abromeit have dealt extensively with aspects of Hokheimer's *Aus der Pubertät. Novellen und Tagenbuchblätter* (Munich, Kösel, 1974), I will dispense with Horkheimer's early writings (before *Dawn & Decline*) relating to this article's objectives.

[12] Abromeit, J. *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School,* p.17.

[13] Ibid., p.374.

[14] Ibid., p.1 and the introductory chapter of this book.

[15] Shaw, M. "Translator's Preface", in Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, pp.13-14.

[16] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline,* p.26.

[17] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence.* (Translated and with and Introduction by M.R. Jacobson and E.M. Jacobson), p.348.

[18] Horkheimer, M. and T.W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments.* (Edited by G.S. Noerr and translated by E. Jephcott), p.(xiii).

[19] Ibid., p.(xi). See also Engelbrecht, C. 'Limitations in History. Part II. Theory and Eastern Cape Historical Research.' Limitations in History. Part II. <http://independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> 26 June 2012, pp.1-12.

One reason that Horkheimer gave in the 'Preface' to 'Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History' (1930) for publishing the studies which make up that material, was that earlier formulations of his work needed reconsideration in light of 'the present'.[20] In other words, current issues facing the philosophy of history can be better understood in historical terms. Clearly then, perspectives change over time because circumstances in society change. At the same time, Horkheimer's analysis of Mannheim's concept of ideology, took place against the '"situational determination" of one's own intellectual standpoint.'[21] In fact, according to Jay, 'Horkheimer did, however, hold out some hope for the attainment of the social conditions that would make Dilthey's methodological vision viable.'[22]

Not surprisingly, researchers about Horkheimer are at pains to clarify changes in his thinking. I list only three examples. For instance, A. Schmidt periodized Horkheimer's intellectual make-up into six stages in order to make it understandable.[23] A broader division of Horkheimer's work was by W. Schäfer into so-called Horkheimer I and Horkheimer II. The former, 'the young Horkheimer of the 1930s, was a fairly orthodox Marxist philosopher who had learned his materialist lesson and repeated it as well as any-one else.'[24] Then 'Horkheimer II, the mature Horkheimer, emerged in the early 1940s as a disenchanted social philosopher, both a socialist intellectual haunted by the thought that Stalinism might represent the future of fascism and a critical theorist ever more drawn to Schopenhauer's sceptical and gloomy humanism.'[25] Lastly, in Habermas's comments about the development of Horkheimer's work, we find the following points: Horkheimer left the world that he created in 1941-one that was so different when he returned, that led Habermas to write that 'might relapse into barbarism at any time'.[26] But Horkheimer never relinquished this belief.

Without going into detail, Horkheimer's January 1931 inaugural lecture (when he became director of the Institute), made this point clear in an indirect way. He wrote: 'In light of the current intellectual situation, in which traditional disciplinary boundaries have been called into question,'[27] the 'guiding

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[20] Horkheimer, M. 'Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.313.

[21] Horkheimer, M. 'A New Concept of Ideology', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.G., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), pp.129-130.

[22] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950,* p.50.

[23] Schmidt, A. 'Max Horkheimer's Intellectual Physiognomy', in Benhabib, S., W. Bonß, and J. McCole (eds.) *On Max Horkheimer. New Perspectives,* pp.25-47.

[24] Schäfer, W. 'Stranded at the Crossroads of Dehumanization: John Desmond Bernal and Max Horkheimer', in Benhabib, S., W. Bonß, and J. McCole (eds.) *On Max Horkheimer. New Perspectives,* pp.167-183.

[25] Ibid., p.168.

[26] Habermas, J. 'Remarks on the Development of Horkheimer's Work', in Benhabib, S., W. Bonß, and J. McCole (eds.) *On Max Horkheimer. New Perspectives,* pp.62-63.

[27] Horkheimer, M. 'The Present Situation of Social Science and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research', in Horkheimer M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.1.

impulse in this Institute be the indomitable will unswervingly to serve the truth!'[28] This means that he will 'undertake to orient the work of the Institute toward new tasks'[29] to fulfil that commitment. One such new task was, he wrote in 1932, 'to offer […] a few remarks concerning the logical place of psychology in a theory of history adequate to the contemporary situation'.[30] But '[o]ur own concept of history is structured by both theoretical and practical considerations of the present'[31], he said. Furthermore, the '[f]orgoing remarks challenge the notion of a uniform definition of man, since history up to now has shown us that the fate of human beings is infinitely varied.'[32] In 1938 – '[t]he difference here is that the critical theory which we espouse […] is guided by the unswerving interest in a better future.'[33] Again, in March 1946 'Preface' to 1946 *Eclipse of Reason,* Horkheimer made this point (although differently) when he maintained that the 'hopes of mankind seem farther from fulfilment today than they were even in the groping epochs when they were first formulated by humanists'.[34]

The 'Foreword' to *Critique of Instrumental Reason,* dated May 1967, gave further clear information about Horkheimer's convictions. He wrote: 'At the end of the Nazi period (I thought at the time) a new day […] would dawn'[35] and he continued that: '[t]ogether with the other founders of Scientific Socialism, I thought that the cultural gains of the bourgeois era […] would surely become widespread throughout the world.'[36] The following year, in the 1968 'Preface' to *Critical Theory. Selected Essays,* we find, firstly, probably the best outlined views of Horkheimer regarding publishing his work. They were: only ideas that can be defended without reservation should be published. Secondly, he conceded that his 'early philosophical efforts would require a more exact formulation today'.[37] To relate his early philosophy 'to the present situation requires careful reflection'[38] he maintained. Thirdly, Horkheimer warned that '[t]houghtless and dogmatic application of the critical theory to practice in changed historical circumstances can only accelerate the very process which the

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[28] Ibid., p.14.
[29] Ibid., p.10.
[30] Horkheimer. M. 'History and Psychology', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.128.
[31] Horkheimer, M. 'Remarks on Philosophical Anthropology', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.174.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Horkheimer, M. 'Montaigne and the Function of Skepticism', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.310.
[34] Horkheimer, M. *Eclipse of Reason,* p.(v).
[35] Horkheimer, M. *Critique of Instrumental Reason. Lectures and Essays Since the End of World War II*, p.(ix).
[36] Ibid.
[37] Horkheimer, M. 'Preface' to Horkheimer, M. *Critical Theory. Selected Essays.* (Translated by J. O'Connel and others), p.(v).
[38] Ibid.

theory aimed at denouncing.'[39] But, he nevertheless granted that '[m]en of good will want to draw conclusions for political action from the critical theory.'[40]

From the above, it is clear that a sense of pessimism was prevalent in his writing already from an early age. Another thing that stands out in Horkheimer's writings is the changed use of terminology. This however, was dealt with elsewhere.[41] The background to this phenomenon one also finds in a revelation to Rosa Riekher in a letter dated 30 November 1921, when Horkheimer wrote that '[i]t doesn't suit me to write things whose narrow boundaries are fixed a priori by the mentality those who will judge them.'[42] Furthermore, he was least interested in 'lifeless facts.'[43] This clearly indicates, already at an early intellectual age, that he did not want to be confined or caged in – neither in his thinking, nor in his writing and later, in his managing of the Institute. Previously, also in a letter to Rosa Riekher and Friedrich Pollock, dated 22 August 1918, he already referred to 'our narrow environment'[44] indicating or pointing towards his aptitude for freer thinking. In the aphorism 'Categories of Burial' between 1926 -1931, he wrote that 'the intellectual landscape keeps changing'.[45] After all, Horkheimer participated in WW I; experienced the Weimar period, the rise of Fascism and Nazism, WW II during exile, saw the rise of Russian totalitarianism, experienced the far-reaching expansion of science and technology, the advent of the Cold War, and the New Left – to mention only a few.

The growth of modern day large-scale industry in changing society embrace, a dialectical contradiction. On the one hand, it increased the intelligence of e.g. the European masses, but on the other, their very material existence, needs to be protected against the negative impact of technological advancement in the hands of the powerful. Unless checked, the masses face, for instance, economic ruin[46] because of their unequal access to forces of production – political power is another[47] scarce resource. This is also true in the fields of hygiene and the world of medicine. Whilst the rich in society can prolong their lives, the poor on the other hand, will not receive or cannot afford the same medical

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] For a discussion on this point, see van Reijen, W. and J. Bransen. 'The Disappearance of Class History in ''*Dialectic of Enlightenment*'': A Commentary on the Textual Variants (1944 and 1947), in Horkheimer, M. and T.W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments,* pp.248-252. See also the publisher's notes 'Intoroduction to Publisher's note: 'Introduction to Adorno & Horkheimer', in Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.(vi).

[42] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence.* (Translated and with and Introduction by M.R. Jacobson and E.M. Jacobson), p.22.

[43] Ibid. See also Engelbrecht, C. 'Limitations in History. Part 1. The Problems With Historical Facts.' <http://independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> 7 June 2013, pp.1-12.

[44] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence.* (Translated and with and Introduction by M.R. Jacobson and E.M. Jacobson), p.9.

[45] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.25.

[46] Ibid., p.17.

[47] Ibid., p.103.

attention. The result is that people do not die equal.[48] Therefore, technological advancement does not stand all classes in society in equally good stead – since the dreaded results of societal ills, 'shared suffering'[49] for instance, has not yet been eliminated from civic life. In other words, human suffering is not equally distributed in society because equal access to opportunities does not exist. It is therefore not surprising that Horkheimer wrote about the relative value of human life. In fact, it is debatable whether Horkheimer viewed men to be born equal because in some form or another most 'people are born into a prison'[50] he wrote. For him, there exists 'the hierarchy of values'[51] in society. The less fortunate in society ('little people')[52] are subjected to the 'system.' For instance: wealthy people bet money to make money, but the labouring class live a miserable life of calculated survival. Those fortunate on top of society (for instance politicians and important industrialists) have the benefit of unlimited possibilities and instruments of domination. The ordinary man in the street admires with resentment[53] the qualities of the upper middle class: their self-assurance, confidence, freedom and access to technology. Horkheimer then compares this situation as follows: 'how many hundreds of lives of workers would have to be added to equal the value of a moderately well-off banker's day.'[54] In this sense, capitalism has really only been a 'cloak for centuries'.[55] It is a system that affects everything and whilst one can make life of other individuals easier, we are, instead, surrounded by a sea of darkness – e.g. 'the lost war where millions of men were sacrificed to naked economic interests'[56] that result into 'boundless suffering.[57] It is an ongoing struggle against the self-confidence of the rising bourgeois that live in a propped up bad society.[58] Per implication, this means that freedom is also not the same for all. For instance, the forces that acquire power over us 'not only drag our lives, but our thoughts into wretchedness and filth.'[59] Naturally, those without money and financial security are dependent on the capitalist who employs the 'others, who have the opportunity of getting to know its underside.'[60]

The dialectical contradiction of capitalism is clearly visible in the early 20th century – an era, what Horkheimer often characterized as one of 'unlimited possibilities'.[61] These possibilities stem from continued technological advancements – advancements that were unknown to humankind not too long ago. Currently, all spheres of human life (e.g. artists, sports, literature – thus not only industry)

[48] Ibid., pp.104; 38.
[49] Ibid., p.18.
[50] Ibid., pp.46-47.
[51] Ibid., p.99.
[52] Ibid., p.81.
[53] Ibid., pp.73-75.
[54] Ibid., p.23.
[55] Ibid., p.18.
[56] Ibid., p.28.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., pp.28; 30.
[59] Ibid., p.43.
[60] Ibid., p.31; 136.
[61] Ibid., p.19.

experienced so-called advancement. This advancement was as a result of increased human capacity for productivity, based on the development of e.g. technology. For instance, during the previous century the skills of the workers have increased beyond all expectations. They are now capable of delivering e.g. manufacturing outputs on time and have the ability of sustaining such for much longer periods than was the case before. The result is that output's achievement of modern day capitalism, surpassed that of previous times. For example, the mass production of Ford Motor Company at the time produces over 9,000 vehicles per day and young people drive around in them in everyday life as a matter of course. Furthermore, modern day press can report daily on world events. The film industry, photography, telephone and radio, have all 'shrunk the world.'[62] These technologies have made it possible to witness the misery of the entire earth in your own city – not even the private lives of movie stars are spared. Present day life has overtaken the past, or, he wrote, the 'present triumphs'[63] over previous times – so then tower the injustices 'of the present economic system'[64] over former epochs. Horkheimer seems to have an alternative when he wrote that '[s]ocialism is a better, more effective from of society whose elements are present in capitalism in a certain sense.'[65] But, just as socialism does not necessarily ''follow' from the economic laws discovered by Marx,'[66] human progress does not necessarily follow from modern day technological advancements.

So then, what is progress in the eyes of Horkheimer? In his aphorism 'Progress', written in the late 1920s, he explained this from two perspectives. Firstly, weapon manufacturers, politicians and high-ranking military personnel will argue that there is no such thing as progress. The masses in society, would agree, since their wretched material conditions, testifies thereto. Secondly, the real meaning of progress, lies somewhere else, seemingly at the philosophical level. He defines progress as follows: 'Progress is the improvement of material existence through a more purposeful restructuring of human contradictions […] it no longer functions as an ideological defence but as a criticism of existing conditions.'[67] No wonder that Horkheimer and Adorno would write in the mid-1940s that they want 'to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly humane state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism'.[68]

Horkheimer's understanding of 'barbarism' is important for this study[69] since he used it throughout his writing career. For Horkheimer technology and barbarism are not mutually exclusive. In the mid-1920s Horkheimer wrote that it is quite possible for humankind to be even more barbarous if they

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., p.26.
[64] Ibid., p.27.
[65] Ibid., p.35.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., p.93.
[68] Horkheimer, M. and T. W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments.* (Edited by G.S. Noerr and translated by E. Jephcott), p.(xiv). Horkheimer's concept of barbarism is quite different from that of Aristotle. See for instance Aristotle. *The Politics*, p.27.
[69] Horkheimer's understanding of 'barbarism' stands in close relationship to numerous other concepts. These will require a study on its own.

have not used violence to do away with it.[70] In the aphorism 'Skepsis and Morality', Horkheimer argued (amongst other things), that there is a moral question about not fighting for socialism 'for the form morality has taken in our time is the implementation of socialism.'[71] If the social order does change to something else, it would be tantamount to human progress perishing 'in barbarism'.[72] Horkheimer repeated this belief in 'The Impotence of Renunciation' – if 'long, world-historical struggles' fails and reverse, society will fall into 'new barbarism, of heightened suffering.'[73] In 'Horror Stories' written around 1930, torture and being killed at the hands of 'barbarous soldiery in his own country or anywhere else in the world'[74] serves as an example of human barbaric deeds. Throughout his life, Horkheimer never compromised the search for truth.

With the advent of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the early 1940s (and in subsequent writings), barbarism became closely related to Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of enlightenment.[75] It is questionable if science can secure human progress. Because humans destroy enlightenment, the very institutions that they create are responsible for this regression. For instance, truth is compromised – the very notion, he declared in his inaugural lecture, that the Institute will 'unswervingly […] serve.[76]

At his point, it would be productive to turn to the discussion between Horkheimer and Adorno over a period of three weeks from 12 March to 2 April 1956 in Frankfurt. I limit this to the objectives for this article. For Horkheimer, to be dependent on the Western world is to be dependent on its propensity to equate human thinking with scientific endeavour. For instance, he had no positive disposition towards space projects to the moon. Even for Marx, he said, science was developing in the wrong direction. Thus, faith in progress was little – after all, history testifies to the non-achievement of human progress. This can be seen in the fact that current life is not advancing towards a welfare state – something that already became evident by the early 1920s. Instead, mankind is self-destructive, and we cannot expect anything more 'than a worn-out version of the American system' of society. On the one hand people do not realize that they are moving towards Nazism – the Russians are already well on their way towards fascism. In fact, Horkheimer said that '[w]e have nothing in common with Russian bureaucrats.' Humans live in horror, the good people are dying off and if he was to be told that things will turn out well, which does nothing for his sense of pessimism. Such view was for

[70] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline,* p.22.
[71] Ibid., p.36.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p.84.
[74] Ibid., p.95.
[75] Engelbrecht, C. '*Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno, and Contemporary South African History.' <independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers> 9 May 2014, pp.1-31.
[76] Horkheimer, M. 'The Present Situation of Social Science and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research', in Horkheimer M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.14.

Horkheimer not reassuring. Even Marxism is not possible without the possibility of an immediate revolution.[77] A meaningful future instead, demands the realization thereof.[78]

Between 1957-1958 when Horkheimer wrote the aphorism 'Hegel and Marx', he referred to 'the assault of the technicized barbarians of the East' that would end society.[79] After all, he wrote some twenty-five years earlier 'Machiavelli holds the view that no form of state can exist indefinitely it will occur in all eternity'.[80] Horkheimer's references to the East and how it links with barbarism, needs some attention. For instance, in 'The Skyscraper', written between 1926/1927, Horkheimer linked the structuration of societies in 'highly developed capitalist countries whose entire existence is based on the horrible exploitation apparatus at work in the partly or wholly colonial territories, i.e. in the far larger part of the world. Extended regions in the Balkans are torture chambers.'[81]

In the case of Russia, for instance, Horkheimer wrote in 1930 that he is still not sure 'where the country is going'[82] but emphasised that 'much misery' exists[83] despite Russia's attempts to overcome 'terrible social injustice.'[84] Against this background, Horkheimer also conceded to the close relationship with ideology that influences appearances (perceptions).[85] Twenty years later, by the 1950s, Horkheimer was more critical of the circumstances in that country. He wrote: 'Aside from the positively or negatively tinged image of present-day Russia'[86] people 'of the twentieth century are being kept in the dark'[87] In this respect, he argued that in 'Russia and the sphere under its control, it is known that they are kept in blind obedience'.[88] This is the situation in both the East and West. Blame should be apportioned to those 'who have the intellectual and material means for enlightenment at their disposal.'[89] Horkheimer's criticism grew. He was convinced that unlike British philosophy that wants us to believe that humankind is simply progressing '… the depth of his [humankind's] nature reflects evil.'[90] This is because our reason does not reflect that we have adapted our lives to a higher

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[77] Adorno, T. and M . Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.2; 45. 53, 19-20; 39; 21; 51; 64; 36, 107; 91.
[78] Gur-Ze'ev, I. 'Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer. From Utopia to Redemption.' <https:www.academia.edu/196504/WALTER_BENJAMIN_AND_MAX_HORKHEOMER_FROM_UTOPIA_TO-REDEMPTION>, p.2.
[79] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline,* p.154.
[80] Horkheimer, M. 'Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.F., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.319.
[81] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline,* p.66.
[82] Ibid., p.72. See also Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950,* pp.19-20.
[83] Ibid., p.72.
[84] Ibid., p.72.
[85] Horkheimer, M. 'Beginnings of the Bourgeois Philosophy of History', in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.G., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.314.
[86] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.121.
[87] Ibid., p.121.
[88] Ibid., p.121.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., p.115.

level. Horkheimer said that Hegel called this 'the cunning of reason.'[91] We are still not free from mythology and superstition[92] – for instance, in Russia parliamentarianism was liquidated – naught came of their hope for freedom.[93] Rather, 'absolute hope is […] stifled."[94]

By 1956 Horkheimer referred to 'the speeches the marionettes from the east make at the United Nations meetings.'[95] Horkheimer wrote about being condemned in advance in Stalinist Russia by the gallows 'for all the world to see' [96] and in 1956 described Stalin as 'probably nothing more than a brutal gangster chief who cannot tolerate criticism.'[97] In "The Future of the Bourgeoisie' (1956) Horkheimer wrote that life in Russia is different from Marx's idea of socialism. Russia, according to Horkheimer, now reflects 'gigantic distortions. This is most apparent in the trials.'[98] It is not the first time that Horkheimer would refer to Marx's teachings. Already in 1930, he wrote: 'With the incorporation of the teachings of Karl Marx into contemporary social science, the intention of his basic concepts is being transformed to its opposite.'[99] Furthermore, 'Hitler and his Mediterranean colleagues were the beginning' of the 'Soviet tyrannies' of 'Russian caricature of socialism.'[100] Therefore, to 'look East is to become aware of the terror of military dictatorship.'[101] In societies where 'where causes of differences between men, wealth and other sources of happiness were abolished in totalitarian countries of the East'[102] a bureaucratic hierarchy was established that would also not suffice for the West. Whereas the 'contemporary American businessman views the old-style European thinker as a plague.'[103] When dealing with morality during 1957-58, Horkheimer said that 'the Russians today see morality as ideological foolishness when they are confronted with it. They are altogether incapable of understanding what it is supposed to mean.'[104] For instance, Horkheimer wrote that collectivism of the East is a caricature of the negation of the individual.[105] Clearly then, when he wrote that 'practical philosophy is humanity'[106] it is at odds with 'the murders in the Kremlin.'[107] Respect and fear are closely allied in the East.[108] As late as the 1960s, Horkheimer sees 'barbaric

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[91] Ibid., p.116.
[92] Ibid., p.119.
[93] Ibid., p.120.
[94] Ibid., p.123.
[95] Ibid., p.129.
[96] Ibid., p.130.
[97] Ibid., p.132.
[98] Ibid., p.137.
[99] Horkheimer, M. 'A New Concept of Ideology?, in Horkheimer, M. *Between Philosophy and Social Science. Selected Early Writings.* (Translated by Hunter, G.G., M.S. Kramer and J. Torpey, with an Introduction by G.F. Hunter), p.129.
[100] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.137.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., p.146.
[103] Ibid., p.151.
[104] Ibid., p.152.
[105] Ibid., p.171.
[106] Ibid., p.152
[107] Ibid., p.152.
[108] Ibid., p.144.

beginnings of socialist authoritarianism in the East.[109] Features are terror and new dictatorships,[110] 'eastern […] Hitlers'[111] and extermination.[112]

For Horkheimer, progress, science and technology stood in a precarious relationship. He Wrote: '[i]f there is such a thing as progress in civilization, knowledge will necessarily spread among men. More of them will be in a position to have a greater and clearer idea of the good than in barbaric phases of history.'[113] Throughout his life, Horkheimer placed a premium of the position of the individual in society. However, he criticized the intellectuals of the East, their Marxism, and the barbarous spread of barbarism that threatened the very position of the individual.[114] Here Critical Theory 'recognizes that injustice is identical with barbarism'.[115] That, amongst other things, would compromise humanity. In fact, in Horkheimer's aphorism "Marx and Hegel", he wrote that 'the assault of technicized barbarians of the East would mean the end of society.'[116]

Even human logic is not spared – the privileged in society are capable of defending themselves against a partial legal code.[117] The same with production – the competition that follows the maintenance of social hierarchy and decreasing wealth, does not benefit the workers and becomes more pronounced when production decreases. Even the value of a worker's life, is not worth the same as that of e.g. a banker or company executive. The technology and productive capacities of the latter, equates time to money and the industrialist controls both at the expense of the worker. But the contradictions in bourgeois capitalism remains – for instance, the non-achievement of the economies of scale, does not make an equitable distribution of material goods available. Horkheimer gave the following two examples: the cost of transportation is for the worker still too high. Thus, technology regarding the automobile has failed him, or, despite the relative size of Chinese agriculture, the labourer remains hungry.[118] In other words, the world has become small[119] because of technology, but is still too large to eradicate e.g. hunger and material disparities. On the one hand the every-day person admires the qualities of the upper middle class – 'technical superiority,'[120] for instance, amongst others but on the other this technical superiority makes it possible for large capitalists to multiply their productive capacities[121] at the expense of the less fortunate.

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[109] Ibid., p.180.
[110] Ibid., p.185.
[111] Ibid., p.230.
[112] Ibid., p.202.
[113] Ibid., p.162.
[114] Ibid., p.169.
[115] Ibid., p.239.
[116] Ibid., p.154.
[117] Ibid., p.21.
[118] Ibid., pp.23-24.
[119] See also Engelbrecht, C. 'Globalization Theory and Reference to Aspects of Eastern Cape (South Africa) History.' <http://africalit.nai.uu.se/exlibris/aleph/a18> 21 May 2011, pp.1-10.
[120] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.27.
[121] Ibid., p.47.

Millions of men were killed (poisoned on battlefields) by the instruments of war available to the rising bourgeoisie.[122] Yet, this 'society certainly has available the human and technical means to abolish the most blatant forms of physical wretchedness.'[123] Therefore, the existing society is 'an evil because a better one would be technically possible'[124] but does not materialize. For instance, 'Bacon's and Galileo's science serves the interests of today's armaments industry'.[125] Even the science of Archimedes devised machines not only for defence, since the Greek catapults benefitted the enemy.[126] Likewise in business the use of machines is supposed to benefit also the workers, but the reverse is true: 'the number of workers […] decrease as more machinery is introduced.'[127]

Conclusion

Despite the fact that Horkheimer lived a "good" life, at least in material terms, his worldviews remained sombre. If, at an early age he had ideas about influencing revolutionary societal change, then towards the late 60s at least, he remained a critic of post-1945 German and American class societies. Horkheimer also wrote 'about the trajectory of [his] ideas[128] in a letter dated 4 March 1970, about 'dubious passages' and 'examples of dubious formulations.'[129] In addition, he wrote about the 'universal dependence of present conditions on the technically unnecessary preservation of relations of exploitations, or some aspect of this relationship of dependency.'[130] After all, the promotion of science are concentrated in the hands of the managers of science, their agents, and company board members[131] - in other words, the bourgeoisie on top of society, not excluding the moneycrats. In fact, Horkheimer has so little hope in the freedom of the individual being controlled in society that in future that 'it will no longer be comprehensible that an individual might dispose his property as he pleases.'[132] One can interpret Horkheimer's view of Russian society as being one of conflict and mistrust between governing and the citizenry. Likewise, freedom of thought and speech are subject to the likes of e.g. Stalin or Big Brother. Technology, for instance, had lost its direction and instead of enlightening humankind, change into ideology. By now Horkheimer (and others) had shrugged of

[122] Ibid., p.28.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., p.29.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., p.34.
[127] Ibid., p.61.
[128] Jacobson, M.R. and E.M. Jacobson (eds.) *Max Horkheimer. A Life in Letters. Selected Correspondence.* (Translated and with and Introduction by M.R. Jacobson and E.M. Jacobson), p.364.
[129] Ibid., pp.348-349.
[130] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.48.
[131] Ibid., p.125.
[132] Ibid., p.126.

their hope for Russia in the late 1920s that socialism might prevail in Russia and the proletariat did not bring about sustainable social change Marxists hoped for.[133]

For Horkheimer the 'pathetic leaders of mass society' control even how we use words in speech through the products of science and technology – e.g. radio, cinema and other methods of torture in the isolated places of incarceration.[134] There is little hope in a future world such as this and led Horkheimer to a point of despair. He remained a critic of an organized world 'in which liberal capitalism, as the last outpost of the history of a failed civilization, was threatening to disappear.'[135] He wrote that human thought is compromised to the extent that one 'despair because you cannot tell the truth as easily as you wish.'[136] This was in about 1956, even after he returned from exile some five years earlier. Neither the bourgeoisie nor the West turn out as was previously hoped for.[137] In the aphorism 'Democracy and Mass Media', written between 1957-1958, Horkheimer lead us to believe that without an enlightened electorate in democracy, mass media of propaganda 'must lead to dictatorship and the regression of humanity.'[138] Furthermore, Horkheimer was convinced that one cannot even live moderately since it requires an ever increasing amount of money[139] and without money one is nothing, 'defenceless against death and terror.'[140] It is almost if he projects that any sense of hope is overridden by a feeling of total gloom.[141]

The bourgeois period will relapse[142] and the attainment of a future just society where only personal differences would remain[143] seems remote. Even the descriptions of science of the 'decline of culture in mass society denotes the misery of things.'[144] Christianity has to compete with 'fascist and nationalistic ideologies which do the job equally well, or better.'[145] Small wonder since the 'thinness of the world religions […] are all as synthetic, artificial, manipulatory as trashy sects like Christian science,'[146] Horkheimer wrote. The position of the individual in future life would be lost for future mankind. The evil in human history cannot be negated[147] whilst 'the earth remains a place of

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[133] Jay, M. *The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950,* pp.66; 100.
[134] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.129.
[135] Wiggerhaus, R. *The Frankfurt School. Its History, Theories, and Political Significance,* p.3.
[136] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.129.
[137] Ibid., pp.137-138.
[138] Ibid., p.153.
[139] Ibid., p.136.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Rabinbach, A. *In the Shadows of Catastrophe. German Intellectuals Between Apocalypse and Enlightenment,* p.193.
[142] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.144.
[143] Ibid., p.146.
[144] Ibid., p.143. For a discussion about Horkheimer and the culture industry and reference to his snobbish attitude towards such, see Murphy, P. A. 'Horkheimer on the Culture Industry & False Consciousness.' <paulaustinmurphy2000.blogspot.com?2014/Horkheimer-on-culture-indistry-false.html> 11 February 2014.
[145] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, p.169.
[146] Ibid., p.123.
[147] Ibid., pp.162-163; 171; 174; 177.

horror.'[148] In this world, technology renders freedom redundant; [149] 'democracy has no historical future.'[150] In fact Horkheimer regarded democracy as its own worst enemy[151] and amidst its most naked forms of capitalistic oppression.[152] In this states no longer have economies, instead they have become economies.[153] For him 'the time will come when individuals and the mass might resort to fanaticism.'[154] Not surprisingly, one will have to live with a 'greater awareness of death.'[155] Horkheimer's critical views about the non-West, we saw earlier above, bodes no better hope for the future.

Between 1966-1969 Horkheimer's views were no less daunting. For him there were a great number of 'symptoms that testifies to the regression of what was once called civilization.'[156] By now he reiterated that the supremacy of technology negated the autonomy of the individual – in fact it is disappearing. Liberalism gave way to the controlling of everything in life by rackets. Truth has be compromised into 'unconditional conformity with meaninglessness.'[157] Furthermore, '[m]an is really becoming and animal, perhaps a complex, more highly skilled animal. Perhaps.'[158]

Nevertheless, in our view, there seems to be one candle burning in the dark tunnel. Horkheimer, in true philosophical fashion, wrote: 'The importance of the individual is waning but in theory and practice, he may critically intervene in this development.'[159] Horkheimer then said: 'The only thing that goes against my pessimism is the fact that we still carry on thinking today. All hope lies in thought. But it is easy to believe that it could all come to an end.'[160] Critical Theory, one could argue, could feed fruitful intervention since greater understanding of suffering is required if we want to concern ourselves with hope for, and activities of, civilization.

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[148] Ibid., p.181.
[149] Ibid., p.174.
[150] Ibid., p.177.
[151] Ibid., p.234.
[152] See Engelbrecht, C. Marx's Theory of Colonisation and Contemporary Eastern Cape (South Africa) Historiography. <http://independent.academia.edu.christoengelbrecht/papers1755482> 25 June 2012, pp.1-17.
[153] Tansel, C.B. 'For a Marxist Critique of Eurocentrism, or Refusing to Throw the Baby out with the Bath Water.' http://ppesydney.net/for-a-marxist-critique-of-eurocentrism-or-refusing-to-throw-the-baby-out-with-the-bath-water/ 16 November 2014.
[154] Horkheimer, M. *Dawn & Decline*, pp.201-202.
[155] Ibid., p.210.
[156] Ibid., p.231.
[157] Ibid., p.237.
[158] Ibid., p.235.
[159] Ibid., p.240.
[160] Adorno, T. and M. Horkheimer. *Towards a New Manifesto,* p.40.

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